

# COLLABORATION BETWEEN LAND TRUSTS AND ECOTOURISM AROUND LAKE SUPERIOR

by

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## **Abstract**

Land trusts throughout the United States have grown in number over the past 10 to 15 years, and consequently so have the number of protected acres via conservation easements. This increase is largely due to the fact that land is becoming more sacred as our population continues to grow. By the same token, ecotourism is becoming a more recognized way of travel for tourists of all kinds. Its popularity (fueled by departments of tourism and the travel industry in general) is based upon the need for tourists to become more self-aware of how their travels impact the environment (i.e. the land). When viewed side-by-side, it seems that land trusts and ecotourism share the same mission or at least have many common parameters.

My project focused on this topic specifically in the Lake Superior region. I began in Bayfield, Wisconsin, and went counter-clockwise around the lake to determine which land trusts exist and how each trust has worked to protect the lake. I also determined whether these trusts were involved with the tourism industry, and whether they shared resources to meet the common goal of protecting the lake.

The results of my research varied. In the case of Wisconsin, the state has established a formal green certification program called 'Travel Green Wisconsin,' in which businesses and natural areas meet certain environmental protection requirements. The state of Wisconsin, however, hasn't worked with land trusts to fulfill this mission. The state of Michigan has one notable land trust on Lake Superior (The Superior Watershed Partnership and Land Trust), in Marquette, however, its mission is almost exclusively to protect the lake (not conserve land). Also, in the case of Canada, ecotourism is primarily confined to governmental land (not private land). In Ontario, partnerships that consist of city government, provincial government, non-governmental agencies, and tribal nations all contribute to protecting the shoreline of Lake Superior. And lastly, in Minnesota only one land trust exists for the entire state (the Minnesota Land Trust), which

has protected many acres along the north shore of Lake Superior between Duluth and Grand Portage.

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# **Introduction & Literature Review**

## **Introduction**

In the past 10 years or so, there has been a growing effort to promote ecotourism on an international level. One would argue that this trend has largely to do with the relatively recent sustainability movement, and the heightened concern for humankind as a whole to get our environmental house in order.

In the United States, some states are taking the initiative to encourage travelers to practice sustainable ways when touring, sightseeing, and otherwise enjoying the great outdoors. Wisconsin is one stellar example of such a state – having created a program and accompanying website titled Travel Green Wisconsin via its Department of Tourism.

In comparison, land trust organizations in most regards serve the same mission as ecotourism. In a nutshell, the mission for both entities is as such: preserve the environment, promote experiencing and supporting local culture, and learn about the native people and heritage of any given destination. Because of this shared mission, it only makes sense for land trust organizations and departments of tourism to join forces to fuel the ecotourism industry.

## **Purpose**

Lake Superior sits on the northern fringe of Wisconsin, and is considered the largest body of freshwater by volume in the world. Needless to say, it abounds with natural beauty along its entire coastline. Recreationalists of all types flock to its shores to swim, boat, hike, bike, camp, canoe, kayak, and the like every year. It's also a prime destination for everyday, common tourists. That is to say, there also are those who simply want to take in the scenery and learn about the history of Lake Superior without the rigor of recreation.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism helps promote this cause for both parties. The department generates revenue for the Lake Superior region (as well as the state as a whole) by catering to the needs and interests of recreationalists and tourists. Through printed materials and other forms of media, the Wisconsin Department of Tourism makes it easy and convenient for travelers to choose their way and type of travel. At the same time, the department wants travelers to be mindful of the environment, and tread lightly wherever they may go, hence the Travel Green Wisconsin program.

In addition, there are several non-profit, land trust organizations that surround Lake Superior. Their mission is to work with private landowners and related governmental organizations (i.e. the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources) to establish what's called conservation easements. These easements allow a land trust to take ownership of private land to protect it from future development. And, in some cases, this land is of natural significance, and open to sightseers/tourists – with the understanding that it is delicate and must be tread upon lightly.

Thus, the objectives of my paper were to research the existing land trusts that surround Lake Superior, and see if any of them have promoted ecotourism. And if they have, are they doing so in the same light as the Wisconsin Department of Tourism? Also if so, what are their shared accomplishments, and can they work together toward common goals in the future? If not, what can be done to bring the two entities together? My research began in Bayfield, Wisconsin, and worked counter-clockwise around the perimeter of Lake Superior.

## **Methodology**

I primarily researched journal articles via the University of Wisconsin – River Falls online library system. In addition, I interviewed those who are privy to the relationship between their organizations and ecotourism around Lake Superior. This list includes the program manager of Travel Green Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.; the program manager at the Superior Watershed Partnership and Land Trust, Marquette, Mich.; and a life-long resident and historian of Wawa, Ontario.

## **Ecotourism**

To begin, it's often hard for someone who is researching ecotourism to find a definition that is consistent throughout the industry. Almost all organizations involved in the industry touch on the point of reducing the human impact on the environment in some fashion in their definitions of ecotourism, but otherwise, the definitions vary widely. Further, there are many players in the industry, from governmental organizations to non-profit agencies to businesses themselves, which have been ever-increasing their 'eco' awareness in the past 10 to 15 years. This increase has led to even more of a myriad of definitions, terms and 'green' buzzwords that might leave the common layperson spinning in confusion.

By the same token, there has been a proliferation of non-profit land trusts being established across the United States in the past 20 years or so. What once was almost considered a niche industry, in which the most valuable land was protected as conservation easements, now practically has become commonplace. The value of land (both economically and ecologically) over time has led to land trusts and all related parties involved to share the common mission of ecotourism. That is to say, there is an ever-increasing awareness that all of us have a responsibility to keep land sacred, so it can be equally shared, enjoyed and protected for this and future generations.

One well-respected, 501(c)3 international organization that solely promotes ecotourism is The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), based in Washington,

D.C. On its website, TIES defines ecotourism in a simple, straightforward way, without getting overly complicated with lexicon. Its definition is as follows: “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” (The International Ecotourism Society, 2012b, para. The Definition). Further, its mission statement (although much more wordy) is really just an extension of its ecotourism definition.

Addressing the need for uniting communities, conservation and sustainable travel, continues to underscore the importance of community engagement in facilitating economic, social and environmental sustainability. Recognizing the critical juncture we find the state of mechanisms to ensure biodiversity conservation and a sustainable future of the world upon which it depends (The International Ecotourism Society, 2012a, para. Our Mission).

In comparison, The Nature Conservancy, another extremely well-respected land trust that is classified as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Arlington, Va., has done extensive conservation planning and protection worldwide, including in all 50 states of the United States. Its business model is primarily why the organization is so successful – combining staff, scientists, and policy experts in such a way that only leads to successful conservation efforts.

The Nature Conservancy has both a mission statement and a vision statement that stresses elements of ecotourism. The former reads: “to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.” The latter reads: “to leave a sustainable world for future generations” (The Nature Conservancy, 2012a, para. Our Mission, para. Our Vision).

Other organizations have similar, but varying language in their definitions, but they all point out the need to soften our tread on mother earth. And this counts for everybody – from the casual person who goes about his or her daily business,



to someone who works in the environmental industry, to someone who travels for work or pleasure. For those in the latter class (pleasure travelers or tourists), the state of Wisconsin is one of only a few states that has strongly supported and emphasized the ecotourism industry through a formal program.

Through its Travel Green Wisconsin program (founded in 2007), the Wisconsin Department of Tourism has formed a healthy marriage between environmentally conscious travelers, tourists, and businesses. In fact, Travel Green Wisconsin is the first state-sponsored, sustainable, travel green certification program in the country that serves as a model for sustainable travel nationally, as well as internationally, according to its website.

The program manager at Travel Green Wisconsin says the idea for the program came from a former secretary at the Wisconsin Department of Tourism. From that point, it blossomed into the full-fledged program that it is today. The manager states this secretary at the department of tourism approached other staff members with the idea for the program, and in 2005, an ad hoc committee was formed to get it going. The committee consisted of staff members from the department of tourism, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), businesses, and business consultants. In 2006, the department of tourism launched the pilot program, and by 2007, the certification program was released statewide, the program manager says.

Although Travel Green Wisconsin doesn't define ecotourism in its own terms, it does have extensive criteria for businesses/participants to become certified in its program. Specifically, each business/participant must comply with a number of sustainable green practices, in which a minimum of 35 points are required to become Travel Green certified. The more points that a business/participant attains, the more it is considered 'green' in its operation.

To start, each business/participant must first determine what's called its Baseline Environmental Performance Assessment, which contains information about the amount of energy, fuel, water, and solid waste that it has consumed during the past calendar year. And although this seems like a daunting task, most of this information can be found through a local utility company. Next, each business/participant must commit to the sustainable green business practices found within the Travel Green Wisconsin application. These practices include:

- Communication and Education
- Waste Reduction, Reuse and Recycling
- Energy Efficiency, Conservation and Management
- Water Conservation and Wastewater Management
- Air Quality
- Wildlife and Landscape Conservation and Management Transportation
- Purchasing and
- Local Community Benefits

Of the required 35 points, 5 points must be earned in the Communication and Education practice. Once the business/participant completes the application and performance assessment, then state-hired environmental experts review them for completeness, accuracy and credibility. The experts also make sure that each business/participant will be dedicated to educating and supporting other local businesses and the community. In addition, each business must submit an annual fee to participate in the program (that is, an annual renewal fee is required to remain Travel Green Wisconsin certified).

The program manager at Travel Green Wisconsin states that one of the unique features of the program is that it focuses on all types of businesses. There are other states that have launched a similar green program, she notes, but those states only focus on the hospitality industry. Therefore, she thinks Travel Green Wisconsin has gotten a lot of attention because it is all encompassing with the

businesses that can become certified. In fact, the program manager points out that she get calls from other states that want to model their program after Travel Green Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Department of Tourism realizes that there are many requirements to becoming certified, and that some businesses might be discouraged by such requirements. Therefore, the department created the certification program in such a way that it is comprehensive enough to be relevant across the diverse tourism industry. It also allows participants to be 'ecopreneurial,' and adopt the green practices that make the most sense for each operation (Travel Green Wisconsin, 2012c, para. Travel Green Certification FAQ).

Maine is another state that is comparable to Wisconsin with regards to conserving land, while promoting ecotourism and other related efforts. Although Maine doesn't have as formal a program as Wisconsin, the state has a record of working in partnership with many organizations to conserve land and encourage eco-friendly tourism at the same time.

### **The lure of Lake Superior**

In the upper Midwest, Lake Superior serves as a mecca for tourists and recreationalists of all types. Its vast shoreline is largely undisturbed (particularly on the northern coast in Ontario, Canada). Of course, there are many organizations and agencies that are dedicated to this cause from single sources to multi-state or even multi-nation efforts.

The Great Lakes Commission is one example of an agency that is dedicated to protecting not only Lake Superior, but the other four Great Lakes as well (Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario). The commission is a nonpartisan, eight-state compact agency based in Ann Arbor, Mich., that (among other functions) helps run a partnership with other agencies to form the Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN). The GLIN provides an invaluable wealth of facts, statistics, and

other data about the Great Lakes.

Of the plethora of information, the first and foremost fact about Lake Superior is that it is the largest lake in the world by surface area and volume. It also is the deepest and coldest. Its surface area is 31,700 square miles, its length is 350 miles, its breadth is 160 miles, and its coastline (including islands) is 2,726 miles (Great Lakes Information Network, 2012a, para. Lake Superior Facts and Figures). By comparison, the second largest lake in the world is Lake Victoria in Tanzania and Uganda in Africa. Its surface area is 26,828 square miles, its greatest length from north to south is 210 miles, its greatest breadth is 150 miles, and its coastline exceeds 2,000 miles (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2012a, para. Lake Victoria).

The natural environment around Lake Superior (and all of the Great Lakes, for that matter) consists of vast forests, rich agricultural lands, thousands of smaller lakes that surround it, and extensive mineral deposits. The glacial history of its watershed supports an array of biological diversity, including more than 130 rare species and ecosystems. The lake itself contains a variety of fish species, including small pan fish such as perch, sunfish, and bass to larger game fish such as trout, whitefish, and northern pike. The accompanying landscape is home to white-tailed deer, beaver, muskrat, weasel, fox, black bear, bobcat, moose, and other furbearing animals. Bird populations range from thousands of small songbirds such as warblers, kestrels, vireos, and swallows to larger raptors such as hawks and eagles. Some rare species that make their home in the Great Lakes region include the world's last known population of the white catspaw pearly mussel, the copper redhorse fish, and the Kirtland's warbler (Great Lakes Information Network, 2012a, para. Environment of the Great Lakes Region/Overview).

Sadly, over the course of history, there have been many threats to the health of Lake Superior (and again, to all of the Great Lakes for the sake of argument). Pollution in the form of airborne toxins has been the primary threat, but other

threats include diverting water out of the Great Lakes basin to the introduction of non-indigenous invasive species. Some researchers and scientists argue that Lake Superior itself is too cold to sustain many of the aquatic invasive species that have completely invaded and suffocated smaller inland lakes. However, such species as the Asian Carp is a threat to all of the Great Lakes, and its infiltration to its waters would be extremely devastating to native aquatic life. On land, invasive plants such as buckthorn, garlic mustard, and purple loosestrife are rampant. Unfortunately, effort to curb the spread of all of the invasive plants has been met with mixed success (The Great Lakes Information Network, 2012b, para. Invasive Species in the Great Lakes Region). Thus, it is ever-increasingly imperative for society as a whole to protect the water quality and sustainable development of the Great Lakes basin for years to come.

Of course, most tourists and recreationalists have a keen sense and consciousness of their impact on the environment. This fact is especially prevalent today, as the sustainable and green travel industry has taken hold in many places throughout the United States, including the Lake Superior region. Without the consciousness of tourists, the water and immediately adjacent shoreline of Lake Superior would degrade at an even faster pace than it would in its natural state today.

Jane Mansbridge is a professor at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Her research studies the relationship between democratic theory and empirical social science, of which natural sciences are a focus.

One of Mansbridge's more prominent books in which she is a contributor is titled "Private Action and Public Good." The book explores the phenomenon of how governments around the world are turning over more of their services to private or charitable organizations. Knowing this trend, Mansbridge has tried to answer the question of whether or not non-profits (including those such as land trusts)

provide more and higher quality services than governments or for-profit businesses, as well as whether or not non-profits really increase social connectedness and civic engagement. In her professional assessment, the answer is a resounding 'yes'.

Professor Mansbridge also provides an excellent overview of how individuals can act both in his or her own self-interest and be motivated by the larger public interest at the same time. "Discovering that one can do well by doing good encourages doing good" (Powell & Clemens, 1998, p. 14). Mansbridge's point is that if one can advance his or her own self-interest while also doing something that is in the public interest, then that individual has a strong motivation to act in the public interest. Mansbridge's (1998) study offers an explanation of how:

Individuals broaden their goals and satisfactions so that they can take some pleasure in the goods of others, find some satisfaction in working for collective ends, and feel fulfilled in acting according to principles that they have made their own. (p. 16)

In the case of Lake Superior, the do-good attitude of land trust members and donors, land owners themselves, and tourists forms a cohesive bond in which each party feels the need to support and 'find some satisfaction in working for collective ends.' Each party's drive to do what's right for Lake Superior in protecting and even saving parts of its ecosystem motivates the other parties to follow suit. In fact, the program manager at Travel Green Wisconsin says that research shows that 79 percent of U.S. adults consider themselves environmentally conscious and 44 percent consider environmental impacts important to them when planning travel. She goes on to claim that a lot of people thought the whole green movement was a trend, but it's not. It's something that's here to stay, according to her.

This vast, deep blue gem of a lake is an irresistible attraction to tourists and

recreationalists. There is so much to see and do (both on and around the lake) that it isn't hard to imagine tourists having a hard time making up their minds. Power boating, sailing, kayaking, swimming, fishing, sightseeing, and day-tripping are among a few of the choices. Needless to say, the travel industry is alive and well on this great lake, and the ecotourism sector plays a key part of the overall industry.

On the south shore of Lake Superior sits the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, which is an archipelago of 21 islands and 12 miles of mainland near the town of Bayfield, Wisconsin. In 1970, the United States Congress established the national lakeshore to protect it from future development, as well as provide a scenic and recreational haven for tourists who come to explore the splendid, vast beauty of the region.

Although the national lakeshore isn't truly a business, but rather a protected national park, Travel Green Wisconsin has been able to recognize it as a certified Travel Green Wisconsin participant. In fact, the national lakeshore scored 84 points on the Travel Green Wisconsin checklist (again, with 35 points being required as a minimum to become green certified).

That is one of the reasons why the Wisconsin Department of Tourism formed a relationship with the DNR when the Travel Green program was launched, according to the program manager. In addition to businesses, the department wanted to get as many state parks Travel Green certified as well, and the DNR helped the department do so. As for the City of Bayfield, it was one of the original municipalities in Wisconsin to be selected as part of our pilot program, according to the program manager. Today, Bayfield has the most businesses that are Travel Green certified of any municipality in the state. The city is doing remarkably well, and setting a prime example for other municipalities to follow suit, exclaims the program manager.

Thousands of travelers and tourists visit the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore every year. Many of them simply come to the shores to sightsee and stay in one of many historic hotels, while others come to hike, paddle, sail, or cruise throughout the host of islands. One unique feature of the Apostle Islands is that it has more lighthouses than any other national park in the country, which includes eight historic towers on six islands. Almost all of the lighthouses are accessible to the general public, and some islands have a volunteer with the National Park Service on hand to give tours of the lighthouses (Travel Wisconsin, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, 2012a, para. Details).

Another unique feature of the islands is the many historically protected shipwrecks – some of them small vessels in shallow water and others large, commercial vessels in deep water. These wrecks provide outstanding viewing opportunities for scuba divers.

Other more common leisure activities among the islands include camping, which is available on 19 of the 21 islands that make up the national lakeshore; and hiking, of which there are more than 50 miles of maintained trails on 12 islands. These trails provide access to lighthouses, abandoned quarries, old farm sites, historic logging camps, beaches, campsites, and scenic overlooks.

As for wildlife in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, more than 240 species of birds breed in and/or migrate through the islands. There also are many larger animals, including black bear, deer, and fox – of all of which maintain relatively healthy numbers among the islands (Travel Wisconsin, Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, 2012a, para. Details).

Madeline Island is the largest of the Apostle Islands, and is approximately 2.5 miles east of Bayfield. Madeline Island is not part of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, but is under the jurisdiction of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. In any event, Travel Green Wisconsin also has recognized Big Bay



State Park on Madeline Island as a certified Travel Green Wisconsin participant, with an overall score of 58 points. The park consists of 2,418 acres, of which a beautiful, natural, white-sand beach wraps around nearly a mile of the shoreline. The southern end of the park contains rugged, wooded cliffs that overlook Lake Superior to the east. However, the most prominent feature of the park is the State Natural Area that contains a lagoon, several bogs, a mile-long boardwalk with a viewing platform, boreal forest, and old growth hemlock. Again, one could argue that the park is not truly a business, but nevertheless Travel Green Wisconsin is able to recognize it as a certifiable green participant.

Immediately south of Superior, Wisconsin, is Pattison State Park, which encompasses 1,476 acres of forested land. It also qualifies as a certified Travel Green Wisconsin participant – with a total score of 57 points. The park is a blend of many species of trees, including balsam fir, birch, aspen, and spruce, and is dotted with wetlands, a lake, and several rivers. It's best natural attractions include Big Manitou Falls (Wisconsin's highest waterfall at 165 feet), a 300-foot beach on Interfalls Lake, and Little Manitou Falls, a 31-foot twin waterfall. In addition, nearly 200 species of birds migrate to the park, 54 species of mammals live here, and many reptiles and amphibians find refuge in the park's varied habitats. Lastly, there are 62 campsites and 9 miles of hiking trails in Pattison State Park (Travel Wisconsin, Directory, 2012a, para. Pattison State Park).

## **Land Trusts**

As previously mentioned in the second paragraph of the Ecotourism section of the Introduction, there has been a sharp increase in the number of land trusts throughout the United States in the past 20 years or so. Further, the work and the mission of each land trust varies, although the Land Trust Alliance provides a simple, blanket definition for such common work.

A land trust is a nonprofit organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by undertaking or assisting

in land or conservation easement acquisition, or by its stewardship of such land or easements. Land trusts work with landowners and the community to conserve land by accepting donations of land, purchasing land, negotiating private, voluntary conservation agreements on land, and stewarding conserved land through the generations to come (The Land Trust Alliance, 2012b, para. What is a land trust?).

For example, in the Midwest alone, the number of land trusts has increased from 119 in 1990 to 186 in 2000, according to the Land Trust Alliance. This equates to an increase from 47,450 hectares being protected by conservation easements in 1990 to 125,128 hectares being protected by 2000 (again, in the Midwest alone). Of course, as the number of land trusts increases in the United States, so do the success stories. In fact, the state of Maine recently worked with The Nature Conservancy to complete the second-largest conservation easement in United States history. It connects 2 million acres of woods, water, and mountains in the Moosehead Lake region of Maine, which is conserved for wildlife, recreation, and forestry. The Nature Conservancy, the Forest Society of Maine, and Plum Creek Maine completed the 363,000-acre easement near Greenville, Maine, in mid-May 2012.

The Moosehead Lake easement is a great example of a renowned land trust working in collaboration with state agencies to ensure that two main objectives are met. The first is that sustainable forestry in Maine remains in perpetuity and the second is that tourists and other recreationalists will enjoy using the land indefinitely in the future. Further, each organization has its own carefully considered rights, privileges, and responsibilities that play a key role in making the entire relationship work between all parties involved (as explained in the following paragraphs).

The terms of the easement, which the Forest Society of Maine will hold, will guarantee public access for traditional recreational uses, including hunting, fishing, hiking, camping (at designated sites), canoeing, and cross-country skiing on set trails. The easement also protects access to 160 miles of trails that hikers and snowmobilers will use. The terms also must meet forestry standards of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, as well as other conservation standards, while allowing forest products to benefit the local economy.

Plum Creek Maine, a subsidiary of The Plum Creek Timber Co. based in Seattle, also is another major player in the Moosehead Lake easement agreement. The company, which produces lumber, plywood, and medium-density fiberboard, also operates a real estate development business. And according to the company's website, it claims to be the largest and most geographically diverse private landowner in the United States. In any case, Plum Creek donated some land to the easement.

And of course, The Nature Conservancy purchased a vast amount of land, using funds raised as part of its ongoing \$100 million Sustainable Maine, Sustainable Planet campaign, as well as some funds that the Forest Society of Maine raised.

As a result, the Moosehead Lake easement bridges existing conservation lands, including 44,000 acres that recently have been protected in the region. The Nature Conservancy and the State of Maine have purchased 15,000 acres known as Moose River Reserve, which includes portions of Number 5 Bog and lands that provide access to the Moose River Bow Trip paddling route. The Appalachian Mountain Club has conserved more than 29,500 acres (including more than 10 remote ponds) near the Appalachian Trail's 100-mile wilderness. In the end, 2 million acres have been tied together for generation upon generation of outdoor enthusiasts and concerned citizens to enjoy.

It also is critical to stress the benefits to numerous wildlife found in the Moosehead Lake area as well. The easement conserves habitat for dozens of protected fish and wildlife species (including brook trout and Canada lynx), as well as 30 sites that have been identified as habitat for rare and endangered plants. The conserved area includes 200 miles of lakeshore, and includes land near Moosehead (the second largest lake in New England), as well as 68 other lakes and ponds (The Nature Conservancy, 2012a, para. 363,000 Acres of Moosehead Lake Region Conserved).

### **The value of landowners**

Although the discussion thus far in this paper has focused on the relationship between land trusts and entities that promote ecotourism, another major party in this equation is landowners themselves. Land trusts work with landowners to secure conservation easements on private land, and without this initial step, the majority of protected land throughout the United States wouldn't be possible. Landowners are vital in every way to completing an easement project, including such renowned ones as the Moosehead Lake example.

Fortunately, many landowners (which primarily includes farmers and ranchers) see the tremendous mutual benefits of conservation easements. It's not all about tax breaks and incentives for landowners, but what the easement will do ecologically for the land going forward. "In addition, productive use of land today is not always measured by productive economic value. The preservation of ecological diversity, agricultural lands, and open space serves an important public good" (Morissette, 2001, p. 384). Most landowners appreciate this preservation, and understand the importance of protecting land for future generations in an ecological sense.

Most landowners also understand (and appreciate) that any restrictions placed on their land per conservation easements don't necessarily decrease the value of their property. In fact, the opposite is true in most cases.

Furthermore, it is not always the case that a servitude that restricts how land may be used in the future will drive down the value of the land; servitudes that protect the land by preventing specific uses may actually increase the value of the land and the value of nearby land. (Morisette, 2001, 384)

In most cases, land trusts stress that ecological diversity and protection of open spaces are the main reasons for conservation easements, however, scenic values for the general public also can be another reason. The only drawback to scenic values is more restrictions.

For example, land donated to a government entity or charitable organization to be used as a public park or nature preserve has a reduced value from the holder's perspective because it cannot be freely sold or exchanged and it must be maintained.  
(McLaughlin, 2009)

This phenomenon also is discussed in another article by McLaughlin titled "Condemning Conservation Easements: Protecting the Public Interest and Investment in Conservation," (2008). The article explains that the entity or organization holding the land on behalf of the public is generally entitled to compensation based on the value of the land as if it were not subject to the use restriction (i.e., based on its unrestricted value), but that such value lies dormant and inaccessible by the entity or organization until the restriction is lifted in the context of a condemnation or cy pres proceeding. The article also explains that the entity or organization must generally use the compensation to accomplish similar charitable purposes in some other manner or location.

## **Results**

### **Maine and Wisconsin comparison**

At this point, it's important to compare the Moosehead Lake region in Maine with the Travel Green Wisconsin sites mentioned in the previous sections. There are many similarities, of course, but yet there are some notable differences as well, as to how each state structures the work it does in land conservation.

First, there is no question that both states are completely supportive of protecting and conserving land for all of the sustainable reasons. And again, although the state of Maine doesn't have a formal and/or designated sustainable (i.e. green) program, it acts in that capacity nevertheless. Second, both states keep tourists and recreationalists at the forefront of their decision-making. In other words, those players in the industry in Maine and Wisconsin understand the grave importance of conservation easements to landowners, but they also understand how tourists and recreationalists can work in tandem and extremely favorably with the states and landowners via easements as well.

The differences lie in the fact that Maine worked with a land trust (The Nature Conservancy) to protect the Moosehead Lake region, while the state of Wisconsin didn't (at least in the sites noted already). Also, both states had ecotourism in mind with these protected sites, however, Wisconsin established them formally through its Travel Green Wisconsin program, and Maine established them by working with a number of parties.

The program manager at Travel Green Wisconsin notes that one opportunity for the state of Wisconsin is to work with land trusts in the future. The Department of Tourism hasn't worked with land trusts in the past, but would like to form a relationship with them much like the department has with the DNR, stresses the program manager. That is, the DNR has helped the department of tourism get state parks green certified, and land trusts could help the department get

protected land via conservation easements green certified as well.

Travel Green's manager also notes that Frog Bay Tribal Park, which sits at the northern tip of the Bayfield peninsula, is a perfect example of property that warrants an ecotourism/land trust partnership. The park, which is the first of its kind to be federally protected as a Native American tribal park, contains an 89-acre boreal forest and a quarter-mile of uninhabited Lake Superior shoreline. It was privately held until recently, but thanks to the collaborative effort of the original landowners, the local land trust (the Bayfield Regional Conservancy), and the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, the land will be preserved forever. The program manager argues that Travel Green Wisconsin could easily have been and welcomes being part of those collaborative efforts. Not only could the department help support the work of land trusts in Wisconsin, but it would further our mission at the Department of Tourism to get more coverage for green tourism, according to her.

### **Michigan's shoreline**

In Michigan, an organization called The Great Waters ([www.thegreatwaters.com](http://www.thegreatwaters.com)) serves as a regional resource that promotes sustainable nature- and cultural-based tourism in the Upper Peninsula of the state. Much like Travel Green Wisconsin, The Great Waters has established a sustainable certification program in collaboration with The Superior Watershed Partnership and Land Trust in Marquette, Michigan. Businesses participating in The Great Waters conservation program can be certified based on a checklist that outlines land management, water conservation, waste management, and energy efficiency. Some businesses take a further initiative to develop materials that educate guests about how their actions and habits affect the health of Lake Superior.

The program manager at the Superior Watershed Partnership and Land Trust mentions that much of the work of her land trust focuses on preventing pollution in Lake Superior, as well as preventing and removing invasive species. Other

efforts include stream inventory and monitoring, dam removal, habitat restoration, native plant re-introduction, shoreline stabilization, and education.

For the program manager at this partnership and land trust, her work has primarily focused on climate change in and around the Marquette region of Lake Superior, however, she is aware of one conservation easement that her land trust has completed in the region. Otherwise, she mentions that conservation easements are not the main focus of the partnership and land trust – at least it hasn't been to date. First, there is very little privately held land with local conservancies here, according to her, much less an ecotourism effort. In fact, ecotourism in the Marquette region primarily consists of recreation on government lands, including the City of Marquette, Township (of Marquette), Marquette County, and the state of Michigan, she notes.

But despite the lack of conservation on private lands and a lackluster ecotourism industry in the region, the partnership's manager believes that The Great Waters has done great work. Plus, part of the mission of her organization is to educate local residents, visitors, and others about preserving Lake Superior. She says that in the population centers, especially Marquette, residents understand lake preservation. She also goes on to say that the Superior Watershed Partnership and Land Trust is in the process of implementing a full-scale beach monitoring program with the City of Marquette to make the storm water entering the lake cleaner. That is one of the roles of her organization, she touts: to help educate people on ways that they can keep Lake Superior clean through best practices on their land.

### **Ontario's shoreline**

Ontario, Canada, borders much of the northern shoreline of Lake Superior. Some tourists and recreationalists argue that this shoreline is the most pristine and undeveloped of any on the lake. Although the region is sparsely populated, there are some businesses in Ontario that cater to ecotourism, such as Naturally



Superior Adventures in Wawa. Here, tourists and recreationalists can choose their desolate adventure via hiking, canoeing, or kayaking packages, but one tour in particular is labeled an eco-tour – the tour to Denison Falls (Lake Superior magazine, 2012, June-July issue).

Denison Falls is on Dog River in Nimoosh Provincial Park about 10 miles west of Michipicoten, Ontario, and accessed by paddling along some of the most remote coastline of Lake Superior. This region also is considered part of the Superior Highlands Conservation Reserve. The journey includes interpretation and visitation to geological features such as diabase dikes, pillows and kettles; natural features such as the boreal-mixed forest; and cultural features such as Ojibwe pictographs.

The establishment of the Superior Highlands Conservation Reserve in 2007 is a huge success story for protecting a large portion of the northern and eastern shoreline of Lake Superior. In fact, by establishing this reserve, much of Lake Superior's north shore remains pristine wilderness. Along the northeastern portion of the lake, Neys Provincial Park, Pukaskwa National Park, Lake Superior Highlands Conservation Reserve, and Lake Superior Provincial Park bookend together to protect a nearly continuous 250-mile swath of coastline.

What began as a seven-year land-use debate in Ontario has resulted in the world's longest stretch of protected freshwater coastline (ON Nature magazine, Fall 2007 issue).

Negotiations between the Partnership for Public Lands (of which Ontario Nature is a member), Ministry of Northern Development and Mines (MNDM), and Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) to finalize the Lake Superior Highlands Conservation Reserve – intended to protect part of the Lake Superior coastline – were kick-started by a proposal from the Michipicoten First Nation (a Canadian Ojibwe Indian tribe), near Wawa, Ontario, to expand its territory.

Renowned among sea kayakers and canoeists, the massive Pukaskwa Peninsula sprawls across 180 kilometers of Lake Superior's eastern coastline, from Wawa north to near Marathon. While a 90-kilometer swath of shore is already protected because it falls within Pukaskwa National Park boundaries, the coastline stretching east of the park to Michipicoten Bay is primarily crown land (owned by the provincial government) and a patchwork of small provincial wilderness areas, parks, and conservation reserves.

One life-long resident of Wawa has spent a great deal of her adult life studying, researching, and recording the historical and cultural history of the region. She recently completed a project in March 2012 titled "Wawa Culture," in which she partnered with nine organizations, including the Town of Wawa and the Province of Ontario, to compile a comprehensive list of resources in the region. According to her, this type of project is commonly coined 'cultural mapping,' and as a result, anyone who lives, works and/or visits the region has a plethora of information at his or her fingertips as to what to see and do. Following is its comprehensive list of resources: creative cultural industries; community cultural organizations; natural heritage; festivals, events and celebrations; cultural spaces and facilities; and cultural heritage. She mentions that the cultural map was a lot of fun to do, and is something that she thinks every community or region should try to complete. It is a positive community engagement tool that can educate residents, administration and visitors alike, she claims.

Although the Wawa Culture Project is intended to draw prospective tourists to the region in some regards, it's not its sole purpose, according to the life-long resident. In particular, it is not labeled or intended solely to promote ecotourism in the region. According to the Wawa resident, ecotourism is not yet viewed with equal value to the local economy as the traditional natural resource-based industries have been over the past 100 years. However, she believes that there is a much larger following for ecotourism than there was even 10 years ago.

The establishment of the Lake Superior Highlands Conservation Reserve began with the Ontario Living Legacy initiative in 1999 to protect the coastline between Pukaskwa and the Makwa River – 15 kilometers west of Michipicoten. For quite some time, land-use issues prevented the reserve from being finalized. However, eventually the land-use issues were resolved, and the reserve safeguarded a corridor of boreal forest for a remnant population of woodland caribou (an at-risk species), as well as protected unique arctic vegetation.

As part of the political picture, the Partnership for Public Lands negotiated with MNLM and MNR to have 21 mining claims and numerous logging reserves in the area surrendered to the conservation reserve. The mining sector was willing to give up all but one of the claims on Lake Superior, and MNR indicated its intentions to set aside areas for logging outside the conservation reserve boundaries.

Among all of the partnerships and cooperation between Ontario's provincial government and other entities to conserve and protect vast amounts of land in the region, to the Wawa resident's knowledge, none of the land was protected through land trusts per se. In fact, there has never been (to her knowledge) any collaboration between local ecotourism and land trust projects. However, with the recent controversy over some aggregate mining development in Michipicoten Harbour, as well as opposition to potential wind turbines near Alona Bay (between Wawa and Sault St. Marie), there is definitely a push by local residents for protection and conservancy, she points out.

That's not to say that there isn't some private land that might otherwise be thought of as public land in the Wawa region. It's just that this private land hasn't been acquired by local land trusts or donated by landowners to local land trusts in what would be considered a formal conservation easement. The Wawa resident says that all of the land in the Wawa region (from Pukaskwa to Montreal River Harbour) is either provincial/national park, conservancy or crown land.

There is no private land in this area other than a few small cottage lots on Michipicoten Bay, a few mining claims and some privately owned islands along the Lake Superior Provincial Park coastline, she states. Regardless, largely Ontario's provincial government is responsible for preserving and protecting land in the region – not land trusts. Still, the point can be argued that land is being preserved and protected (by whatever means), and that's most important. And perhaps residents who own private land would someday be willing to consider easements on their property, but there always will be a degree of caution in doing so.

The quagmire is that residents of the Wawa region whole-heartedly want to preserve and protect their natural and cultural resources, but by the same token, they need sources of livelihood (i.e. industries and businesses) to sustain economic development and security. Preserving nature comes at a cost, in other words, and the question becomes 'is it worth it?' for the sake of possible economic decline. Many local residents push for protection and conservancy, says the Wawa resident, but there also seems to be an equal number of residents ready to receive any kind of economic development that may help the financially depressed status of our region.

Much like the stipulations that govern a land trust, the Province of Ontario has put conditions on how and to what extent the protected land can be used in the Wawa region. Governmental conditions are in place, not simply to be in a position of control, but to serve the main purpose of land conservation – to protect the land. For example, some existing land uses such as hunting, fishing, and trapping are allowed in conservation reserves. Further, once negotiations are complete, mining, logging, and hydroelectric developments will be prohibited in Lake Superior Highlands (ON nature, 2012a, para. Saving a spectacular shoreline).

Despite the great influence of Ontario's provincial government on land

preservation, it is important to point out that land trusts are alive and well throughout Canada as well. In fact, The Nature Conservancy Canada is a major non-governmental organization in the country, which was created in 1962 and modeled after The Nature Conservancy in the United States. In 2000, there were 82 land trusts across Canada. No national statistics are available about the number at present, but four provincial associations bring together most of the country's land trusts: the Alberta Land Trust Alliance has 9 local or regional members; the Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia, 27; and the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, 32. The Network of Protected Natural Areas of Quebec lists 60 members, but does not indicate which are land-owning organizations. Three national land trusts also collaborate with the provincial alliances.

According to its website, the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA) was established in 1997 with 14 founding members, and by 2003 it grew to 23 members and became an independent organization. It also includes some regional trusts that have helped preserve and protect areas of the Lake Superior shoreline at Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie.

OLTA was established as a committee of the Federation of Ontario Naturalists in 1997. Known as the Ontario Nature Trust Alliance, it had 14 members when founded. In July 2002, the membership grew to 23 land trusts, which decided to incorporate as a new independent organization named The Ontario Land Trust Alliance. This change better reflected the land trust activities of all its members, which now included recreational, agricultural, and built heritage, as well as natural heritage properties.

These land trusts are non-profit organizations with charitable status established to preserve lands of significance in their respective communities. They serve Rainy River, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Georgian Bay, Muskoka, London, Oak Ridges Moraine, Kawartha, Rideau, and Thousand Islands. These organizations are at work throughout the province. OLTA also includes well-

known provincial and national organizations such as Ontario Nature and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (Ontario Land Trust Alliance, 2012a, para. History).

Across Canada, OLTA works with national land conservation partners, including the Canadian Land Trust Alliance, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited, and Wildlife Habitat Canada. And although OLTA lists the Government of Canada as one of its key supporters, it doesn't mention that it actually works with the government to fulfill its mission or work. In 2004, the Ontario Ecotourism Society was established, with part of its mission to: "involve all stakeholders from a wide range of sectors including tourism, conservation, environmental advocacy, sustainable product and service suppliers, government and non-governmental associations, operators and travellers" (Ontario Ecotourism Society, 2012a, para. Our Mission).

The society also states that part of its mission is to: "provide a venue for advocacy concerns and support for the protection of our natural and cultural resources." However, despite this collaborative support, there is no indication that the Ontario Ecotourism Society, the Government of Ontario, and regional land trusts in Ontario are working directly and officially with each other to complete conservation efforts along the Lake Superior shoreline.

### **Minnesota's shoreline**

Minnesota's shoreline is the most developed and visited of all of Lake Superior's shoreline. From its northernmost point in Grand Portage to its southernmost point in Duluth, the Minnesota coast is dotted with hotels, resorts, restaurants, parks, and other scenic attractions. And much like Michigan, Minnesota doesn't have a formal, state-run, statewide ecotourism program, but does recognize businesses that claim or support ecotourism. Further, there is only one land trust (the Minnesota Land Trust), founded in 1991 and headquartered in St. Paul, which

represents the entire state in its conservation easements.

According to its website, the Minnesota Land Trust has completed approximately 20 projects on the shoreline of Lake Superior as of June 2012. All told, the land trust has completed 439 projects, protected 39,902 acres, and protected 857,160 feet of shoreline statewide (Minnesota Land Trust, 2012a, para. About Us).

A couple of notable easements that the land trust has protected on the shoreline of Lake Superior include the Grand Marais Park in Grand Marais, in 1996 (along the far northern Minnesota coast) and the Radio Tower Bay in Duluth (along the far southern Minnesota coast). The latter project is particularly unique because it is the site of an historic sawmilling operation, of which the land trust removed more than 240 derelict wooden pilings that once bisected the bay in the St. Louis River Estuary.

## Conclusions

One clear conclusion as a result of the ecotourism and land trust research is that states/provinces tend to have more influence on environmental issues (i.e. land preservation) when budgets are healthy. When funds are lacking for states/provinces, it appears land trusts make up for this deficiency by increased effort in land preservation.

The dramatic growth of land trusts can be understood as a response to the roll back of the State in environmental issues: land trusts intervene at a time when the public budget for conservation and environmental agencies is being cut back. This trend is most pronounced in the United States, although conservation easements and conservation covenants are increasingly used globally, particularly in Australia, New Zealand and Latin America. (Gerber, 2012, p. 290)

One possible suggestion for improving or building upon the relationship between ecotourism and land trusts is to have them work directly with each other. Just as Travel Green Wisconsin has a green certification program, land trusts could develop such a green program as well. I would envision land trusts doing an initial formal agreement with landowners first, followed by an accreditation process by the particular state involved. This process would require more time and legwork up front, of course, but would strengthen, and add more credibility and consistency to green certification in the end. In addition, combining state/land trust efforts would be more economical, as well as keep both the states and land trusts current and abreast on business/land conservation certifications on an ongoing basis.

Another possibility would be to continue cultural mapping projects in communities around the perimeter of Lake Superior. The projects would be modeled after the



Wawa Cultural Mapping Project in Wawa, Ontario, and could include slight variations depending upon each particular community. Cultural mapping provides a one-stop shop of resources in a community for residents and visitors/tourists alike, and as a result, provides a boost to the local tourism industry. It also creates a mindset that residents and tourists take pride and care greatly for their community, which translates to eco-friendly practices. It also creates a strong cohesion between the local government, residents, tribal members, and cultural and natural interest groups. The upshot is that this cohesion provides protection to Lake Superior as well.

In conclusion, Lake Superior is understood and appreciated by many as one of the greatest bodies of fresh water in the world. Also, its health and sustainability is paramount to the health and sustainability of the millions of residents who line its shore. The sharp increase in the number of land trusts (not only in the Lake Superior region, but nationally) likely is the reason why this greatest of the Great Lakes will remain unspoiled for years to come. Couple this trend with the increasing awareness of the ecotourism industry, and the chances of success in preserving and protecting the lake becomes all the better. The good news is that all of the concerned citizens, residents, and tourists that consider Lake Superior sacred in some form or fashion are like-minded – preserve and protect the lake and its surrounding shoreline. Conservation, it turns out, is coming from all angles (state departments of tourism, government, land trusts, and individual efforts), even though the lines sometimes are blurred between parties. But again, never mind the source, Lake Superior is undoubtedly cherished as one of the greatest natural resources that the world has to offer.

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